

Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 01391

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SUBJECT: RAYMOND ARON ON KISSINGER YEARS

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE ON SECRETARY KISSINGER BY
RAYMOND ARON AND HEADLINED QTE HENRY KISSINGER:
BALANCE SHEET AND HERITAGE UNQTE APPEARED ON PAGE 1
OF FIGARO OF JANUARY 12:

2. BEGIN QTE: WHAT JOURNALIST WON'T REGRET THAT
HENRY KISSINGER IS GOING TO DISAPPEAR FROM THE WORLD
SCENE, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY? NO SECRETARY OF STATE
EVER GAVE THE PROFESSIONALS OF INFORMATION AND
SENSATION AS MUCH FOOD FOR THE MIND; NO OTHER EVER
DEVOTED AS MUCH TIME TO THEM. A PERSONALITY WHO
LOOKED AFTER HIS IMAGE, HE DAZZLED YOU BY HIS KNOW-
LEDGE OF THE DOSSIERS, HE IMPRESSED YOU BY HIS
ATHLETIC PERFORMANCES, HE ASTOUNDED YOU BY HIS
CALCULATED IMPROVISATIONS AND RUMPUSES. IN TURN
CAJOLING AND CHURLISH, HE OVERCAME HIS INTERLOCUTORS BY
HIS PATIENCE. ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS SUCCUMBED NOT
SO MUCH TO HIS CHARM AS TO HIS PHYSICAL RESISTANCE AND
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PRESENCE OF MIND AFTER SLEEPLESS NIGHTS. WHEN SAIGON
FELL AND FOUR YEARS OF EFFORTS VANISHED INTO SMOKE,
HE TOOK UP AGAIN THE READINGS OF HIS YOUTH, MEDITA-
TING ON THE DECLINE OF THE WEST, AND FAITHFUL JAMES
RESTON REPORTED THE GLOOMY REFLECTIONS OF THAT
'PHILOSOPHICAL BRUTE', OUT OF PLACE IN THE CIRCLE OF
RICHARD NIXON OR GERALD FORD, AN IMPROBABLE STAR WHO

CONQUERED WASHINGTON AND HELD PART OF THE CONQUERED
GROUND UNTIL THE END, DESPITE WATERGATE.

3. THE QUESTION TODAY IS NO LONGER OF ADDING A PORTRAIT
TO SO MANY OTHERS. THIS COLLEAGUE OF THE HARVARD
PROFESSOR KNOWS BADLY THE INTERLOCUTOR OF SADAT,
SCARCELY THAT OF CHOU EN-LAI, AND THAT OF NIXON AND
HIS CLIQUE EVEN LESS. THE END OF A REIGN PROMPTS ONE
TO DRAW A BALANCE-SHE-T AND TO PONDER THE HERITAGE; A
PROVISIONAL BALANCE-SHEET, TO BE SURE, AND AN EQUIVOCAL
HERITAGE: THE DIPLOMATIC ANALYSIS IS LIKELY TO GO WITH
THE WIND OF HISTORY; BUT IT SHARES THIS FATE WITH THE
DIPLOMATIC ACTION ITSELF. WHO DOES NOT REMEMBER THE
PARIS ACCORDS AT THE DAWN OF THE YEAR 1973, THE NOBEL
PEACE PRIZE? TWO YEARS LATER, THERE DID NOT REMAIN ANY-
THING OF THE LONG MONTHS OF NEGOTIATIONS, OF THE TONS OF
BOMBS POURED ON HANOI, OF THE THOUSANDS OF DEAD.

4. AN ACCORD IN 1969 WOULD HAVE REQUIRED A MORE
VISIBLE ABANDONMENT OF THE THIEU GOVERNMENT THAN THE
ONE TO WHICH RICHARD NIXON RESIGNED HIMSELF IN 1972-
1973; THE RESULT ON THE SPOT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME,
THE NORTH WINNING THE VICTORY BECAUSE IT WAS STRONGER,
NOT BECAUSE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE RECEIVED THE TROOPS
FROM HANOI AS LIBERATORS.

5. RICHARD NIXON WAS COMPELLED BY AMERICAN PUBLIC
OPINION TO SEEK A WAY OUT, TO BRING BACK TO AMERICA
THE EXPEDITIONARY CORPS WHICH COULD NOT WIN THE WAR
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BECAUSE ONLY THE AIR FORCE CROSSED THE DEMARCATION LINE
AND BECAUSE A DEFENSIVE WAR AGAINST AN ELUSIVE ENEMY
COULD NOT BE WAGED INDEFINITELY. IN 1973, KISSINGER
BELIEVED THAT THE FOUR MORE YEARS OF FIGHTING HAD
ENABLED THE US TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS TO AN ALLY
AND GIVEN THE THIEU REGIME A REASONABLE CHANCE OF
SURVIVAL. HE STILL CONTENTS THAT, WITHOUT WATERGATE,
THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WOULD NOT HAVE HURLED THEIR
DIVISIONS AGAINST THE SOUTH. TYRANNY OF DIPLOMATIC
ACTION IN A DEMOCRACY: THE STATESMAN MUST PER-
MANENTLY LOOK OUTSIDE -- AT HIS ADVERSARIES AND ALLIES
-- AND INSIDE -- AT THE POLITICAL CLASS, AT THE PRESS,
AT PUBLIC OPINION. IF HE LACKS DOMESTIC SUPPORT, HE
FINDS HIMSELF PARALYZED ABROAD. JUST LIKE GENERAL
DE GAULLE IN ALGERIA, HE DID NOT FIND ANY SOLUTION
EXCEPT WITHDRAWAL. HE DID NOT MANAGE TO TRANS-
FIGURE THAT INEVITABLE DEFEAT INTO A VICTORY OF THE

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UNITED STATES OVER ITSELF. YET HE MANAGED TO GIVE
THE IMPRESSION OF MAKING IT THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER
POLICY.

6. THE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE'S CHINA,
THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH MOSCOW ON STRATEGIC ARMS,
SIMULTANEOUS WITH THE ENDLESS EFFORTS OF THE AMERICAN
LEADERS TO GET OUT OF VIETNAM WITHOUT LOSING FACE,
MARKED RICHARD NIXON'S FIRST TERM OF OFFICE. IN 1973,
THE FACE WAS SAVED; IN 1975, NIXON HAD DISAPPEARED AND
OTHER ELEMENTS MONOPOLIZED ATTENTION. THE UNITED
STATES HAD LOST A WAR BUT REMAINED THE FIRST ECONOMIC
AND EVEN MILITARY POWER IN THE WORLD. MANY WELCOMED
THE HUMILIATION INFLICTED ON THE GIANT; EVERYONE
CONTINUED TO FEAR ITS FITS OF ANGER; A FEW PEOPLE
WERE EVEN MORE EAGER TO GET ITS PROTECTION, SINCE IT
APPEARED LESS ASSURED.

7. BETWEEN THE PARIS ACCORDS AND THE FALL OF SAIGON,
THE YOM KIPPUR WAR AND THE INCREASE OF OIL PRICES
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UPSET THINGS, THE FORMER THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE LATTER THE WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION. WHATEVER THE JUDGMENT ONE BEARS OF HIS OVERALL VISION, HENRY KISSINGER HAS BEEN AN INCOMPARABLE CRISIS MANAGER. HIS MACHIAVELLIAN MASTERPIECE (THE ADJECTIVE USED IN ITS AMBIVALENCE) WILL REMAIN THE YOM KIPPUR WAR, WHICH CAUGHT THE ISRAELIS UNAWARE AND WHICH THE EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS WERE TO WIN MORALLY WITHOUT THEIR ENEMY ACTUALLY LOSING IT.

8. ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, THE SYRIANS, AFTER AN INITIAL ADVANCE, WERE REPULSED RATHER THAN DEFEATED; THE EGYPTIANS VAINLY WAGED GREAT BATTLES OF TANKS. HENRY KISSINGER DELAYED AS BEST AS HE COULD THE SENDING OF EQUIPMENT TO THE ISRAELIS WHILE SUPPLIES HAD ALREADY BEEN FLOWN IN BY THE SOVIET AIRLIFT. THE DAY WHEN THE ISRAELIS WERE IN DANGER OF LACKING AMMUNITION, MASSES OF THE LATTER ARRIVED TOGETHER WITH A FEW 'SOPHISTICATED' ARMS AND GADGETS.

9. THERE STILL REMAINED A LAST TASK FOR KISSINGER: TO PREVENT THE EGYPTIANS FROM DESTROYING THE THIRD EGYPTIAN ARMY WHICH THEY HAD ENCIRCLED. THIS IS HOW THE CONDITIONS, NECESSARY IF NOT SUFFICIENT, FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT WERE CREATED.

10. THE ARAB SUCCESSES ELIMINATED THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOCK; PRESIDENT SADAT TURNED TO THE AMERICANS WHO, IN CONTRAST TO THE SOVIETS, WERE PERHAPS IN A POSITION TO OBTAIN FROM THE ISRAELIS CONCESSIONS THAT THERE WAS NO CHANCE TO SNATCH WITH ARMS IN THE SHORT-TERM. THE STRONG COME-BACK OF THE UNITED STATES INTO AN AREA WHERE MOSCOW SEEMED TO HOLD SO MANY POSITIONS, SO MANY CARDS, SOMEHOW OFFSET THE VIETNAM DISASTER AND REFUTED THE EXTREME FORM OF THE DOMINO THEORY. HENRY KISSINGER HAD NEITHER FORESEEN NOR WANTED THE SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN ATTACK;
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THE SOVIETS DID NOT NEED HIM TO MAKE THEMSELVES UNBEARABLE TO THE EGYPTIANS. BUT HE KNEW HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES, HOW TO ACQUIRE PRESIDENT SADAT'S CONFIDENCE, HOW TO CAREFULLY PROPORTION THE ADVANTAGES OF ALL AND SUNDRY, AND LASTLY HOW TO REFRESH THE MEMORIES OF A BRINKMANSHIP MORE SYMBOLIC THAN REAL WITH A SPECTACULAR STATE OF EMERGENCY.

11. HENRY KISSINGER'S REACTION TO THE UPPING OF OIL PRICES WAS NEITHER AS RESOLUTE NOR AS FORTUNATE. HE WAVERED BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE OF CONFRONTATION, THE

THREAT OF FORCE, AND NEGOTIATION. HIS QUARRELS WITH MICHEL JOBERT ABOUT AN ENERGY AGENCY THAT HAS REMAINED UNEMPLOYED APPEAR IN RETROSPECT AS DERISORY ON BOTH SIDES. OR SHOULD ONE BELIEVE THAT THIS STAGING CONCEALED THE REAL GAME, THE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SAUDI ARABIAN SOVEREIGN, THAT IS TO SAY THE MAN WHO IN THE LAST ANALYSIS DECIDES THE FATE OF OPEC AND OIL PRICES? THE TRUTH APPEARS TO ME TO BE THAT, IN ECONOMIC MATTERS SUCH AS ENERGY, AID TO THE THIRD WORLD, OR THE CURRENCY MATTERS, HENRY KISSINGER DID NOT LACK COMPETENCE BUT AUTHORITY, EVEN THOUGH HE COQUETTISHLY ASSERTS THE CONTRARY. THE LEADERS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY WERE NOT ALL DISMAYED BY AN UPPING OF PRICES THAT PENALIZED THEIR EUROPEAN COMPETITORS MORE THAN THEMSELVES. THREE YEARS LATER, THESE POSSIBLE MACHIAVELLIS LOOK LIKE NITWITS. INSTEAD OF THE INDEPENDENCE

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PROJECT, THE UNITED STATES HAS APPLIED, OR SUFFERED, A DEPENDENCE PROGRAM; IT NOW IMPORTS 40 PER CENT OF ITS OIL CONSUMPTION. THE WORSENING OF THE ECONOMIC RECESSION IMPERILS THREE OF ITS ALLIES, BRITAIN, ITALY AND FRANCE. THOSE WHO COUNTED ON, OR MIGHT HAVE COUNTED ON, THE PRICE OF ENERGY TO RESTORE US TRADE FORTUNES (THE US DID NOT NEED THAT AID, COSTLY FOR THE WHOLE WEST)

ARE NOW COUNTING ON SAUDI WISDOM AND THE STABILITY OF
A TRADITIONAL REGIME.

12. THE OTHER VICISSITUDES OF THESE EIGHT YEARS --
SOME ALREADY FORGOTTEN, OTHERS STILL IN THE NEWS, SUCH
AS CYPRUS, ANGOLA, RHODESIA -- WILL BE WRITTEN, SOME
IN THE ASSETS COLUMN, OTHERS IN THE LIABILITY COLUMN,
IN THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S BALANCE-SHEET. IN THE LAST
ANALYSIS, WHAT MATTERS MOST AND WILL DETERMINE THE
JUDGMENT OF HISTORY IS THE OVERALL CONCEPTION THAT IS
BELIEVED TO HAVE INSPIRED HIM AND WHOSE SIMULTANEOUS
MANIFESTATIONS ARE DETENTE AND THE REFUSAL TO CONTACT
THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS. IN THE INTEREST OF DIRECT
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RELATIONS BETWEEN MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON,
HENRY KISSINGER ACCEPTS THE RUSSIAN DOMINATION OVER
EASTERN EUROPE. TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE
RESPECTIVE ZONES OF THE TWO SUPERPOWERS, HE READILY
HELPED THE ADVERSARIES OF PRESIDENT ALLENDE IN CHILE OR
DECLARED THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE INACCEPTABLE IN ITALY.
COMMENTING ON THIS POLICY, A POLE HAD THIS IRONIC
REMARK: SUPPORT THE COMMUNISTS WHERE THEY ARE ODIUS,
FIGHT THEM WHERE THEY ENJOY SOME POPULARITY. HE
WOULD RESPOND TO THIS: HOW IS ONE TO OUST THEM FROM
POWER WHERE THEY ARE ODIUS? THEY HAVE TO BE FOUGHT
BEFORE THEY HOLD POWER, THAT IS TO SAY, WHERE
THEY STILL EXPRESS POPULAR ASPIRATIONS.

13. ALL US PRESIDENTS HAVE SOUGHT A DIALOGUE WITH
MOSCOW -- EXCEPT FOR TRUMAN BETWEEN 1948 AND 1953, BUT
THAT WAS MORE STALIN'S FAULT THAN HIS OWN DECISION.
IN THE MATTER OF NUCLEAR ARMS, THE FIRST AMERICAN
INITIATIVES DATE BACK AT LEAST TO J.F. KENNEDY. THE
COMBINATION OF PARTIAL AGREEMENTS WITH MOSCOW AND OF
RESISTANCE TO THE LOCAL ADVANCES OF THE SOVIET UNION
DEFINES NOT SO MUCH THE KISSINGER MANNER AS THE
UNWRITTEN LAW OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IN THE PAST THIRTY
YEARS. THE DETENTE TODAY NEVERTHELESS INCLUDES SOME
NOVELITIES.

14. THE SOVIET UNION HAS REACHED PARITY WITH THE US IN
NUCLEAR MATTERS; IT HAS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A STRATEGIC
MOBILITY -- THANKS TO ITS FLEET, ITS AIR FORCE AND ITS
BASES -- THAT MAKES IT A WORLD POWER DESPITE ITS
ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL INFERIORITY. HENRY KISSINGER
DECLARES NORMAL THIS IMPERIAL WILL OF A STATE WHICH
IMPOSES AN IDEOLOGICAL
ORTHODOXY ON EASTERN EUROPE BY THE FORCE OF BAYONETS.
ONE YEAR OUT OF THREE, THE SOVIET UNION PURCHASES MIL-

LIONS OF TONS OF GRAIN IN THE UNITED STATES. EVERY
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YEAR, IT BUYS FROM THE WEST MACHINES, PLANTS IN WORKING
ORDER, TO FILL THE GAPS IN ITS PRODUCTION APPARATUS OR
TO IMPROVE ITS EFFECTIVENESS. ARE THE ECONOMIC AND
TECHNICAL INFERIORITY -- EXCEPT IN ARMAMENT MATTERS --
OF A WORLD POWER, THE COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE
EAST AND THE WEST PRIMARY PRODUCTS AGAINST PRODUCTION
GOODS, ALL THE MANIFOLD ASPECTS OF DETENTE NORMAL?
DO THEY OFFER THE PROMISE OF A PEACE STRUCTURE?

15. BETWEEN THE BOOKS OF PROFESSOR KISSINGER AND THE
IDEOLOGY OF DETENTE, I DO NOT PERCEIVE ANY LOGICAL
LINK, EVEN THOUGH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S SELF-
PRIDE HELPS ME SEE HOW HE MANAGED TO TRANSFIGURE IN HIS
OWN EYES A PRAGMATIC ACTION INTO A LONG-TERM VISION.
THE PROFESSOR WARNED AGAINST THE ILLUSION OF CONVERTING
THROUGH NEGOTIATION A REVOLUTIONARY POWER INTO A
CONSERVATIVE POWER. THE SECRETARY OF STATE PERHAPS
BELIEVES THAT THE AGING BUREAUCRATS WHO GOVERN THE
SOVIET EMPIRE HAVE LOST ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ALEXANDER,
GHENGIS KHAN OR NAPOLEON. MAYBE SO, BUT THEIR TROOPS
MAINTAIN ORDER IN WARSAW AND WEIMAR. ENRICO
BERLINGUER IS AWAITING HIS HOUR AT THE DOOR OF THE
ETERNAL CITY. THE IDEOLOGY OF DETENTE, TO BE SURE,
THREATENS THE SOVIET DOGMATISM JUST AS MUCH AS DOES
DEMOCRATIC LIBERALISM. THE FACT REMAINS THAT
MOSCOW IS KEEPING IN RESERVE THE ULTIMA RATIO OF THE
PRINCES, MILITARY FORCE, WHILE THE DEMOCRACIES RESIST
ONLY BY THE STRENGTH OF PUBLIC OPINION. BY PUSHING

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THE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION TOO FAR, HENRY KISSINGER RAN THE RISK OF MORALLY DISARMING THE WEST, DESPITE HIS MANIPULATION OF EMERGENCIES, AND DESPITE, OR BECAUSE OF, HIS VETO AGAINST THE ICP.

16. ALL JOURNALISTS WILL MISS KISSINGER, AS I SAID AT THE OUTSET. AND THE STATESMEN? IN A SENSE THEY WILL ALL MISS HIM, BECAUSE THEY WERE USED TO HIM AND THEY FEAR THE UNKNOWN, A US PRESIDENT MYSTERIOUS BY THE VERY FACT OF HIS INEXPERIENCE.

17. AS FAR AS THE SOVIETS AND THE CHINESE ARE CONCERNED, THE REGRETS APPEAR SINCERE TO ME, ESPECIALLY IN MOSCOW. BREZHNEV COULD NOT OBTAIN MORE FROM ANOTHER SECRETARY OF STATE, AND IF THEY ADMIRE THE MANAGER OF EMERGENCIES, THESE DO NOT OCCUPY IN THEIR THOUGHTS THE SAME PLACE AS IN AMERICAN THINKING. THE CHINESE LEADERS PROBABLY HAVE BEEN A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED BY THE MEDIOCRE CONSEQUENCES THAT RESULTED FROM THE REDISCOVERY, BUT THEY DO NOT EXPECT MORE FROM THE UNCLASSIFIED

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SUCCESSOR. MANY EUROPEANS OUGHT TO REJOICE AT THE DEPARTURE OF A SECRETARY OF STATE MORE EUROPEAN BY HIS NATURE THAN ANY OTHER AND WHO EXASPERATED THE FRENCH -- AND NOT ONLY THE FRENCH -- ON MANY OCCASIONS. THE LEADERS OF THE ECONOMY IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE FOR A LONG TIME LOST ANY SYMPATHY FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY BECAUSE IT IS POLITICALLY STERILE AND CONTRARY TO THEIR COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. HENRY KISSINGER REMAINED OUTSIDE THE ESOTERIC QUARRELS OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY. BUT HE MADE HIS MASTER'S CANE FELT EVERY TIME THE SIX OR THE NINE SHOWED ANY SLIGHT DESIRE FOR COMMON ACTION, FOR EXAMPLE TOWARD THE ARAB WORLD. HE, WHO BELIEVED HIMSELF, WHO WANTED TO BE EUROPEAN, WHO WISHED TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH GAULLIST FRANCE (HE PLEADED THE CAUSE OF GAULLISM WHEN HE WAS A PROFESSOR) BECAME THE SYMBOL OF AN AMERIC- AS PROTECTOR

RATHER THAN ALLY. HE DID NOT ALWAYS BRIDLE IN HIS
RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN STATESMEN A WILL FOR POWER
BEFORE WHICH HIS AIDES TREMBLED.

18. I AM NOT IGNORANT OF THE PLEA HE WOULD MAKE AGAINST
THIS: THAT HE DID NOT WANT THAT; THAT HE COULD NOT
ACCORD TO EUROPEANS WITHOUT ANY WILL, OR WITHOUT
ANY OTHER WILL THAN NEGATIVE, A STATUS OF EQUALITY
THAT HAS TO BE DESERVED. IT WOULD TAKE MORE SPACE TO
APPORTION EQUITABLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL AND
SUNDRY.

19. THE FACT REMAINS THAT IT WAS IN HIS RELATIONS
WITH EUROPE THAT HENRY KISSINGER WAS THE LEAST SUCCESS-
FUL -- AT LEAST IF ONE MEASURES SUCCESS BY THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WHAT ONE CLAIMS TO WANT AND THE
RESULTS THAT ONE REACHES.

20. JIMMY CARTER, EDUCATED BY BRZEZINSKI AND THE
TRICONTINENTAL ORGANIZATION, WANTS TO GIVE BACK TO
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EUROPE AND JAPAN THE PLACE OF WHICH THE DIALOGUE WITH
MOSCOW AND PEKING HAS DEPRIVED THEM. YET LET US BE
CAREFUL NOT TO IMAGINE A SUDDEN CONVERSION. ON THE
WORLD SCENE IMPORTANCE IS A MATTER OF ARITHMETIC;
WEST GERMANY AND JAPAN HAVE GOT IT, FRANCE HAS TO
FIND IT AGAIN. WHAT HAS NEVERTHELESS CHANGED IS THE
FACT THAT THE EGO OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE WILL NO
LONGER STAND BETWEEN THE INTERLOCUTORS ON BOTH SIDES
OF THE ATLANTIC. AND HE WILL PERHAPS ACKNOWLEDGE
TOMORROW THAT IF HE FAILED IN EUROPE IT WAS BECAUSE
HE SOMETIMES FORGOT THE LESSON WHICH ADMIRATION FOR
BISMARCK SHOULD HAVE MADE HIM KEEP IN MIND. THE
DIPLOMACY OF EMPEROR WILHELM'S REICH BEFORE 1914 WAS,
IN FACT, OFTEN MODERATE; IT WAS NEVER MODERATE IN
STYLE. END QUOTE.
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